6 Generating Research Objectives in Social Research

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Introduction

Research is a creative and strategic process that involves constantly assessing, reassessing and making decisions about the best possible means of obtaining trustworthy information, carrying out appropriate analysis, and drawing credible conclusions (O'Leary 2004:1). Research fixes the gap of informational need required to address a myriad of problems affecting all facets of human endeavours. It involves the collection, exploration and reporting of information about people and society (Yates 2004). Research involves searching for truth, gathering facts, analyzing data and using data so gathered to solve substantial problems in the social world.

The decision to embark on research is often tailored toward solving concrete problems affecting the existence of humanity. Research is not only a set of skills, but also a way of thinking (Kumar 2014:2). Research must be viewed as a dynamic process that is more rigorous and complicated than many people realize (Gray et al. 2007:1). It is on this basis that a researcher is expected to be circumspect in relation to how he will go about finding answers to questions bothering his/her mind on social related challenges. As a matter of fact, the aim of studying social issues in any context is to increase our understanding about the forces that drive our world (McQueen and Knussen 2002:3). Before the commencement of any research therefore, one needs to have some idea of what is at stake for the research pursuit.

Research activity is akin to embarking on a journey with a clear-cut destination in mind but which can only be made successful with a road map. This map is mostly conceived in research as the objective of the study. It is made real through the qualitative thinking of a researcher. It represents those unction, ingenuity and dexterity often put together to make research doable and resourceful. It is these attributes that constitute the focus of the research. In most cases, it is often the product of a researcher's concerns generated through thinking that is mostly expressed as the objectives of the study. These objectives exemplify the search light upon which a researcher relies to get to or arrive at his/her destination. The components of thinking is what translates into the gamut of objectives often put forward by a myriad of researchers in diverse fields. This is referred to as finding the focus or purpose of research.

What is Objective of Study?

The above question can further be extrapolated to mean, What is the research trying to achieve or what question am I trying to answer? This

will be examined in a moment. But for the purpose of clarity, it is obvious to know from the outset that no matter the type of research that is existent in any academic field, there is none conducted without a purpose in mind. Purpose is the soul of any research. In essence, "there must be a reason for doing the research as otherwise there would be no point to spending time, money, and effort undertaking the investigation" (Descombe 2002).

The purpose of any research is mostly depicted as the "aim" and the "objective" of study. Determining the research aim leads naturally to determining its objectives. In social research, these two concepts remain outstanding to the overall process and success of most research work. As the concepts connote, aim talks more about the direction of research efforts, while the objective indicates what the researcher intends to achieve, and it defines the specific aims of the study (Farrugia, Petrisor, Farokhyar and Bhandari 2010). Research objectives are more specific than the aim and relate directly to the research questions (Grove et al. 2014; Parahoo 2014; cited in Doody and Bailey 2016:22). Aim also announces and paints the need for the research; correspondingly, the objective signifies the contributions that the research outcome will make to the resolution of several hitherto identified problems enunciated in the statement of the problem section of a research work or project. Aim analogically represents the brain of the researcher, while the objectives depict the body of flesh required to accomplish the intent of the research. It is the objective of the study that makes the overall research activity meaningful and worth striving for. It generates simplicity of the processes and helps research achieve its purpose.

According to Adogbo (2003:64), with the existence of the aim and objective of study, the researcher expresses the need for his/her project and its contribution to the economic, social, political, and religious growth and generally, to the educational advancement of mankind. In research, one needs to recognize the social conditions and contexts that enable scholastic points of view on the world to emerge and invariably, the pursuit of a particular course of action promoting the objectives of research in all known academic domains (May and Perry 2011:10). Objective of any study is synonymous with the question "Why research"? The starting point with the formulation of the research objective is the research problem. There is affinal relationship between the study objective and the research problem. The challenge needed to be resolved constitutes the why of any research. It is declarative statements that focus on the identification and the description of variables or concepts and sometimes on determination of relationships of variables and which provides tacit explanation on the line of action.

Research objective is also described as statement of purpose in another sense. These statements of purpose indicate the focus and direction of the research, and provide criteria for evaluation of the outcomes of the

research (Denscombe 2002:25). In the same vein, Creswell (2003:87), explains that the purpose statement establishes the direction for the research. It is the most important statement in an entire research study. It helps in orienting the reader to the central intent of the study and from it, all other aspects of the research follow, hence it represents the focus of the research. In research, finding the focus involves identifying what it is that the researcher wants to gather information about (Robson 2011:47). Until such focus is determined, further planning is impossible. Focus of research consists of researcher's decision, area of interest and what he/she is concerned about. This revolves around the five questions put across by Blaxter et al. (2003:12):

- *Where are you coming from*?

This question presupposes that a stable state exists initially but there is a form of strain introduced that thus destabilizes the existing state of things which now calls for scientific concern. In this regard there is a state of disequilibrium whose effect is staring at the faces of those at the receiving end of the recorded problem. It represents a state of arousal or an announcement of conflictory state that must be addressed.

- *Whose side are you on*?

This probes into the avowed intention of the researcher on what he aims at achieving by engaging the current challenge. The aim may be reduced to any or the combination of the following: description, explanation, analytical and pragmatic solution to identified strain. The researcher may play the role of an antagonist or become a protagonist in order to remove or reinforce the strain observed within the system. In social research this condition promotes the appraisal of the felt or observed problem. This engenders the adoption of varied definitive steps that are often geared towards the circumstance calling for researcher's attention.

- *Where are you intending to get to*?

The destination of the research effort must be clearly stipulated in the body of the objective of study. The destination involves what the research will help in achieving in the short and long term if its recommendations are adopted or applied. What the coverage of the research output will be capable of addressing should be clearly stated at the onset or the research objective. In a precise manner, the researcher decides the borders of his/her inquiry and in the strength of such borders sets out or takes steps to achieve the aim of the research within the confines of what he/she thinks will best unravel the mystery behind his/her topical issue.

- *Do you want to change the world or change your world*?

The general aim or objective of any research is to suggest a change from what hitherto exists to a new and bettered state. In most cases, research

instantiates the course of action that will promote the betterment of human existence. In essence, there must be the advertisement of "the good" and benefits that the research findings will give or confer by removing the strain or stress inherent in a given system. Most often than not, research efforts are geared toward resolving complicated or problematic social, economic, physical and other issues affecting humanity. This is often accomplished through the constitution of a concise and executable objective of the study.

- *Are you a pragmatist or idealist*?

A researcher must state unambiguously the approach needed to accomplish the change he desires. The objective must be expressed in a clear term. If the objective requires practical results rather than principles or theoretical approach, this must be stated in earnest and if it will rely on personal opinion this also must take precedence in the organization of the objective. All these when put together will make the objective of study explicit and assist the policy implementers to carry out the required change envisaged by the researcher.

Instinct behind the Objective of Study

The instinct behind the objective of any study is not remarkably different from the complete focus of most research works. As a matter of fact, human quest for growth or development often generates unanticipated consequences. These consequences are exemplified in dislocations that often cause the arousal of interest or attention of social researchers. At the initial stage of problem-interest attraction, there is a consistent romance between the research actor and the substantive problems requiring to be solved. It is in the process of the accumulation of concerns to remedy any perceived, felt or anticipated problem, that the researcher transforms his or her interest into an objective to be pursued. The research objective in this regard tends to help the researcher define his/her scope of study; assist in projecting the variables that are most germane to the study and offer clues on how best they can be measured; give direction on the appropriate steps to follow in order to generate solutions to the problems under focus; provide specific boundary to the coverage of the research; permit judicious use of research resources and, aid the avoidance of collecting irrelevant data that are not in tandem with the research focus. Apart from the problem based generated research objectives, there are several other means through which a researcher can raise suitable objectives to aid investigation. It was apt for Robson (2011:48) to identify several others which often dictate the pendulum of research efforts. These include:

- ***Group Driven Research Objective:*** In few cases, research often lies in the group domain. This is what Robson described as making group decision. Whenever research coalesces a significant number of people, the objective of study is collectively produced through

the collation, analysis and selection of the most appropriate option from the figment of ideas of the group members on certain topics for investigation. Here, individual members independently think about, and write down, their proposals for the research focus and this process is followed by harmonization of ideas.

- ***Pressure/Interest Driven Research Objective:*** In many cases, researches are conducted under a specified area of interest handed down by commissions or organizations. In this regard, the researcher is expected to draw from the concern of the sponsor and make workable objectives to meet the requirements stipulated by the financiers of the project. Research is reduced to what Robson referred to as having the decision made for you. The main task of the researcher at this juncture is the translation of the topic of interest into something researchable and 'doable' within the contrarious situation of time, resources and finance at his disposal.

- ***Inward Propelled (starting where you are) Objective of Study:*** Being independent in developing or raising the subject matter of any research endeavour automatically qualifies a researcher to think inward in the generation of the suitable objectives of study. Significant research projects often conducted among the educational institutions fall within this category. Students at close to the expiration of their programme in the university are expected to write a long essay or project which reflect their capacity to conduct research. The objective of the study forms an important aspect of the individual's research. However, in the views of Robson, this liberty should exclude the introduction of prejudice or biasness likely to be occasioned by the fore-knowledge a researcher has on the particular study. In formulating the objective of study in this wise, it is expected that a researcher gets himself/herself acquainted with the various developments in the area of interest to avail him/her the opportunity of getting to the appropriate objective needed to solve the problem under focus.

  In the case of writing long essays in the university, students are guided to formulate sensible ideas about what the objectives of the study should be. They run with such ideas to get to the destination of the research effort. Put in the word of Robson, frequently encountered problems are obviously a sensible choice for a research focus as anything useful that a researcher finds out has a direct spin-off, and, importantly, there will be no shortage of instance to study. Many things are known by the researcher prior to the commencement of the work which makes it easy for him/her to develop and fine-tune the objective to make it amenable to the research topic or problem.

Social Problem and Objective of Study

There is a fundamental relationship between the existence, identification and the sporadic responses often attendant to the resolution of social problems. With the decision to find out the cause of a problem, a researcher equally instantiates the process of what his or her objectives are. In other words, once a specific social problem is identified, the urgent need towards solving the problem arises and invariably, this becomes the objective of the researcher. The zeal directed at making things work as anticipated becomes the impetus to engage the searching out of the probable causes and solution to any given problem. Social problems and the objectives to solve them are closely knitted. For any objective to be made amenable to the resolution of any typology of social problems, there must be some researchable attributes that must be linked to the identified problem. The problem that will promote the development of a good research objective must be empirical in nature (capable of being investigated), significant (its existence is actually affecting a substantial number of people), important (its solution will make human life more comfortable and better) and must be able to generate the desired result (Bordens and Abbott 2002; Avwokeni 2007).

Configurative Dimension of Research Objective

In writing the research objective, a clear line of demarcation is expected to be followed; just to know that objectives are small particles which give direction to appropriate method through which a delineable problem could be solved. A researcher must be able to sever two segments that are conventionally approved for formulating research objective. The first segment is the "primary" which the researcher is bound to achieve, and the second, "secondary" which constitutes incidental objectives which must closely be related to the research objective (Newell and Burnard 2011; Doody and Bailey 2016:22). In line with the purpose of data gathering and for the intent of proffering solutions to social problems, a researcher must determine in advance the overall goal of the study and this must be in alignment with the imagery earlier conceived (that leads to the propose topic of study) by the researcher in order to guide him/her in the collection of requisite information that will answer the question "why" the research.

Second, he/she must also determine other delineated pursuits that will lead to the realization of the complete thought underpinning the research topic under focus. In essence, there should be a definable general objective which is sometimes referred to as the aim of the study by significant scholars in the scientific environment and complimentarily, specific objectives involving the decomposition of the broad view of a research into smaller units that will facilitate expeditious collection of data. The latter must be stated in a logical, coherent and functional, sequence to allow for some systematic investigative efforts. Specific objectives must be clearly phrased in operational terms, thus specifying exactly what a

researcher is going to do, where, and for what purpose. It must be stated in a realistic way especially when one considers the peculiarity of both the study and the attributes of the local conditions that will make its operationalization realizable. Specific objective statements must be expressed using action verbs that are specific enough to be evaluated (Lyons 2017). The specific objectives are often many in number unlike the general objective that is often framed in a broad pattern. In the combination of both general and specific objectives, the researcher should be able to present an unambiguous line of action that will assist him/her arrive at an answer to these questions—Why do we want to carry out the research? What do we hope to achieve at the completion of the study? These questions form the hub of the intent of a researcher at a given moment.

Location of Objective of Study in Scholarly Writing

The location of objective of study vary from one institution to another. In some universities, it comes immediately after the research question, while in some it features before the latter. In all known institutions, research objective is located in the first chapter of any research report. This is also in consonance with what was found in literature. Creswell (2003), for instance, posits that the objective of study in journal article writing are often fused into the introductory section of the paper, while the exact position for research purpose for thesis or dissertation writing is made to stand as a separate section. The major determinant of the exact position of the objective of the study lies in the permissible interest of the research community cross culturally. Although, there is a suggestion that the objective of a study be written in a clear and concise manner, there exists no hard and fast rule or general agreement on its appropriate position in the body of a research work.

Research Design and Objective of Study

A far reaching objective of research is a function of the preparation of good work plan through the determination of what information is required to solve logical research problems. Research design deals with logical problem and not logistical problem (Yin 1989:2 cited from de Vaus 2001:9). There are many different approaches to social science research, a sometimes bewildering array of methods and techniques, each apparent with its own advantages, disadvantages and rules (Manson and Dale 2011:1). This difference is often referred to in the scientific field as research design. Taking cognizance of these diversities of method and approaches, a seasoned researcher must be capable of making his/her objective judgement precise, measurable and adaptable to the required context of finding solutions to a myriad of social challenges. The researcher must know that the tune of any research is knitted to its method and correspondingly, there are implications of this on the use of method and the formulation of the purpose of study.

Particular research strategies are good or bad to the degree that they fit the question or purpose of the project (O'Leary 2004:2). It then becomes a challenge to the researcher to know from inception what kind of data and knowledge in relation to specific social phenomenon, is most appropriate. A pseudo method can potentially be produced before being able to make a good judgement about which method best addresses the intent of the research. In the formulation of a functional research objective, a seasoned researcher should really know that the principal objective of applied research is to find solutions to some pressing practical problem and in the context of his/her exploration in the field of basic research, the objective to be pursued must be tailored towards finding information with a broad base of application and which could be added to the already existing organized body of scientific knowledge. Objective must be made unique to each approach or method.

Qualitative Type Objective of Study

There is something so unique about the nature of objective of study derivable through qualitative research. This form of research places more emphasis on the study of phenomena from the perspective of the insiders (Lapan et al. 2012:3). It is interested in uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon, understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam 2009). A comprehensive insight is presented by Creswell (2003:88) into the type of purpose of study that is unique to qualitative research:

- The statement of objective is presented as a separate sentence or paragraph and thus bearing a heading with the use of words such as 'purpose' 'intent' or 'objective' with a body that is mainly expressed in 'was' for a completed work or 'will be.' for a proposal. The statement is a central controlling idea in a study.
- Qualitative based objective of study is mostly focused on a single phenomenon (or concept or idea). The purpose is usually narrowed to one idea to be explored or understood. The focus means that a purpose does not convey 'relating' two or more variables or comparing two or more groups typically found in quantitative research (p. 89). Although, qualitative study may promote exploration of relationship or promote comparison among ideas, the likelihood of this occurring cannot be anticipated at the beginning of a qualitative study.
- Qualitative research is apt at using action verb to arouse its audience and it is basically used to convey how learning will take place. Action word such as 'describe', 'understand,' 'develop,' 'continue the meaning of, 'or 'discover,' keep the inquiry open and convey an emerging design.

- An emerging design is also enhanced by non-directional language rather than predetermined outcomes. Qualitative design use this to guarantee neutrality in rendering outcomes to enhance freedom of expression by the respondent. Objective statement is not suggestive of forceful posture on the respondent to respond in a predetermined way.
- Provide a general working definition of the central phenomenon or idea. The intent of study is conveyed to reader at an early stage in a proposal or research study, and a general sense of the central phenomenon so that they can better understand information that will unfold in the study (p. 89).
- Objective of study in qualitative context include the use of words denoting the strategy of inquiry to be used in data collection, analysis and the process of research, such as whether the study will use an ethnographic, grounded theory, case study, phenomenological or narrative approach (p. 90).
- A provision is made in the objective to state the number of participants in the study. A specified number of people which may be one or more individuals, a group of people, or an entire organization.
- Qualitative research objective states unequivocally the site for the research such as homes, classrooms, organizations, programmes, or event. This is made sufficiently explicit to enable reader to know exactly where a study will take place.

Quantitative Type Objective of Study

The objective of study in quantitative research differs remarkably from the one expressed above. The area of demarcation involves the use of language, nature of focus, comparative variables or constructs (Lepan et al. 2012):

- The design of quantitative objective statement begins with identifying the proposed variables for a study (independent, intervening, dependent, control, confounding), drawing a visual model to identify sequence, locating and stating from the onset how the variables will be measured or observed. The quantitative objective type consists of paragraph that contains the following:
- As in the case of qualitative, objective, there is an affinity in the use of the words to signal intent or purpose or objective of the study. It may read thus: The objective of this study is (was) or will be.
- The express identification of theory, model or conceptual framework to test in the proposal of study. Mentioning this in the purpose statement provides emphasis on the importance of the theory and foreshadows its uses in the study.

- The objective must contain words indicating the connection between the independent and dependent variables and their relationship. There is an indicator of the existence of relationship between two or more variables or a comparison of two or more groups. Connecting variables in objective statement is central to quantitative studies. A combination of comparing and relating variables is unique to this form of design.
- A predetermined ordering of variables from left to right which begins with the independent variable and followed by dependent variable is obvious in the content of objective statement linkable to quantitative research.
- Quantitative objective type provides specific type of strategy of inquiry required in the conduct of the study. They will invariably help the researcher to discuss the methods used and enable the reader to associate the relationship of variables to the inquiry approach.
- Just like the objective of statement in the qualitative type, mention is also made of the unit of analysis through reference to participants and a mention of the research site.
- In quantitative research, investigators use set and accepted definitions for variables. This does not replace specific operational definitions about how variables will be measured.

Mixed Method Objective Type

This involves the combination of qualitative and quantitative objective type statements. Creswell argues that these statements need to be identified early in the study in an introduction and this functions to provide a major signpost for the reader to understand the qualitative and quantitative parts of a study. The organization of mixed method objective type include:

- The use of signal words at the commencement of objective presentation such as "The purpose of" or "The intent of."
- The expressive type of mixed methods design used such as sequential, concurrent or transformational.
- A concise inclusion of the purpose for combining both qualitative and quantitative data in the proposed study.
- Inclusion of the characteristics of a good qualitative purpose statement such as focusing on a single phenomenon, using action word and non-directional language, mentioning the strategy of inquiry and identifying the participants and the research sites.
- Inclusion of the characteristics of a good quantitative purpose statement, such as identifying a theory and the variables, relating variables and comparing groups in terms of variables, placing these variables in order from independent to dependent, mentioning the

strategy of inquiry and specifying the participants and research sites for the research.

- Researcher should also consider for inclusion in the objective statement the specific type of both qualitative and quantitative data collection (Denscombe 2002; Creswell 2003; Lapan et al. 2012).

Empirical Dimension of Objective of Study

There are several types of research and invariably their research objectives. According to Babbie (2005:111), before designing a study, one must define the purpose of the project. Usually, the purpose for undertaking research should be expressed as a report. As earlier stated, the objective of any study constitutes its purpose which often comes as a report on what the research project purports to do. A good first step in designing a project according to Babbie (2005), is to outline such report which becomes a clear indicator of the type of research design that is most appropriate. This will help a researcher to describe the kinds of statements to make when the research is complete.

In the research community, there exists no general agreement on the appropriate or the best way for presenting research objective. Nonetheless, this does not permit researchers to present inadequate research objectives on any topic of choice. By this reasoning, it then becomes important for any would-be researcher to source for reasonable attributes to be included in their research objective. A caution here, is for researchers to toe the line of permissible range generally known across their various disciplines. Drawing from our observation over time as project supervisors, it is quite important for anyone who intends conducting a study that he/she keeps abreast the salient concepts that run through the topic of research, develop them into probable ideas and translate such ideas into concise research objectives. Asides this experience, the most striking attributes of a good research objective was put forward by both Denscombe (2002) and Johnson and Christensen (2014). These attributes include:

(i) ***Applied Research Type Objective of Study*:** The ability of a research objective to make provision for predictions about future events or situation. It must be capable of forecasting outcomes. Research objective must give room for now and further insight or anticipations that will aid future research. This may involve for example, the prediction of the likely course of action of Nigerian terrorists like Boko Haram which may not be envisaged for now, or may be suggestive of complications that may likely attend unabated pain induceable by recessive economy. In this, the research strives to predict events and supply useful forecasts to be used by planners who might be interested in predicting the potentials of insurgent groups, or arrest the tide of mass unemployment in time to come. This form of objective is most suited for applied research. This entails standing at the vantage

point of the known and making projection into what may likely be unknown or may possibly occur in time to come. This singular attempt captures the intents of most social researchers the majority of who often strive to control the future trend of a social problem.

(ii) ***Pure Research Type Objective of Study***: The strength of research work lies in its ability to explain the causes or consequences of something. It must provide answers to the question, why do things happen? To this extent, a seasoned research objective must be capable of providing, and should be embedded with the zeal of unraveling why things happen. For instance, research attraction may be drawn to finding answers to the question, why are Nigerian politicians prone to corruption under different democratic dispensations? In this, research objective must be borne out of prior experiences of relationships between events (democracy and corruption) and this should help our understanding further on why corruption remained pervasive under democracy despite the tenets underpinning its operationality. This is most appropriate to pure research. Finding the causative factors of most potential socio-economic related problems underpins the principles driving the pure research type objective of study in the social science disciplines.

(iii) ***Evolutionary Research Type Objective of Study:*** Research in diverse shades often attempts to make one value judgement or the other on why a recommended course of action will best solve a problem or the other in contradistinction to adherence to current order of things. To achieve this, research objectives must be able to establish from the onset the likely deficiencies in the current state of things and the need to prepare our mind for the appreciation of a newer brand that the research will bring into existence or unravel. In the theoretical field of sociological discipline, Marxism best exemplified the evolutionary account of the economic system. Marx considered this structure as the infrastructure. Across different epochs to Marx, the change in economic system explains societal complexity, and he viewed communism as the preferred last stage that will be devoid of contradictions currently plaguing national economies cross-culturally. Considering this from another level of analysis, a researcher may set out to discredit the current system of government in Nigeria (Presidential system) and may aim to project the benefits of adopting another option (Parliamentary system) as an antidote to mal-governance and political policy instability. This typology is most appropriate to evolutionary research. For instance, an evolutionary study directed at unraveling the causative factor and checkmating the prevalence

rate of corruption; being a project sponsored by the Central Bank of Nigeria, may link such prevalence to the proliferation of currency in the system and may proceed to suggest cashless option as an antidote to corrupt related practices.

(iv) ***Descriptive Research Type Objective of Study:*** The most important feat of a good research work is its ability to furnish the research community with information that did not exist before. The research objective in this regard must direct attention to the investigative adventure the research work will be embarking upon. Most investigative research falls into this category. Aim and objective of research in this context should be focused on the attempt to explain or describe how things are. Facts about events are collected and the end result of the research project is to describe the situation. The objective of research in its descriptive form may be an effort to find out the attributes of an ideal woman, that is, sought with the intent of describing or recommending her attributes to the research audience or community.

(v) ***Action Research Type Objective of Study:*** The desire to solve a perceived problem or to improve upon an ongoing practice or procedure of doing things may well inform the type of objective that is mostly required in this context. A researcher with professional biasness in industrial sociology, for instance, may develop interest in changing a particular trend in an industry or organization. It may be a suggestion to improve upon the mode of paying compensation to company retirees or may equally involve the need to advocate for increased productivity among the workers of an organization. A researcher may be interested in the quality of care offered to patients in public hospitals and may therefore wish that the hospital management do more to solve the perceived challenges faced by care receivers.

(vi) ***Empowerment Research Type Objective of Study:*** Researching involves getting to know more about people or things. The predicament or state of things (mostly in their deteriorated position) tends to drive the objective of a research. In this regard, the researcher creates some form of affiliation with the plight of the people or creates sympathy for how an event is unfolding, thus as it were, neglecting the injunction to be neutral in research reporting. At the onset, the researcher laments the *situation and proceeds to look at, and conduct the study to favour those perceived to be disadvantaged.* A prison research may focus on the powerlessness of inmates in determining what to eat, time to rest and vocation of interest and thus recommend a change in the order of things in various prisons.

Objective of Study: A Pre-requisite to Survey Research

The most central to the overall work of a research is the ability to explain, describe or analyse the event under focus. The intent behind the will to explain an occurrence precipitates the formulation of research objectives. Considering research objectives in the context of survey, this consists of general descriptions describing the types and categories of information the researcher wants to obtain from the survey; from what target population; and an explanation of possible comparisons (Snap Surveys 2012). Any research experience possessed by the researcher at times informs the formulation of the objectives but, at other times, it is legitimate to select focus which leads the researcher to branch out and gain experience of a strategy or technique not within his competence (Robson 2011). The researcher begins with interesting, curious and anomalous phenomena that he observes, discovers, or stumbles across (Marshall and Rossman 2006:24). Objective of study prior to other research processes may be gotten through direct experience or observation and may as well develop from discussions from others about what is scientifically desired, timely and useful. Purpose or objective of research is borne out of the will to solve problems or directed at changing and improving a perceived or felt situation. Survey research can only be an appropriate strategy only when the overall aims of the study have been fully laid out (Gray et al. 2007). The formulation of research objectives must precede the choice of research method. The most appropriate thing to do by a researcher is to determine what things are necessary to unravel and the reason why they must be unravelled. Objective reinforces the justification for a research work, and makes it narrow and directional. It is the objective of research that helps the researcher in the classification of research study perspectives and such can be classified as descriptive, correlational, explanatory or exploratory (Kumar 2005).

Synergizing between Research Problem, Question, Hypothesis and the Objective of the Study

Within the framework of thinking which often births research objectives, there is no isolation of a step from several others which most times make research a compact effort. A robust research is anchored on a perfect coherence of the major elements of research. A watertight affiliation is expected between the contents of research problem, questions, hypothesis and the objective of the study in research endeavours. The research problem constitutes what a researcher is trying to find out or unravel (the mysteries behind the observed or experienced problem) while the question represents the bit-by-bit puzzles fragmented together to enable the generation of solution or programs, to solving the problems (Coley and Scheinburg 1990:13); hypotheses consists of gestural statements borne out of research questions earlier developed to solve an existing research problem. The objective of the study in this context functions as the interventionist framework put together in a concise manner in order to

achieve the resolution of the set apart problems placed under focus. Behind the focus on interventions lies the idea of a problem which needs a solution (Punch 2013:15) and the objective of the study now becomes the established framework of the expected outcomes that will assist in the pursuit, efforts directed at the selective reception of information, analysis and eventually the arrival at the solution to the problem. Creswell argues that researchers need to distinguish clearly between the purpose, the problem in the study, and the research questions. The purpose sets the objectives, the intent and the major ideas of a study, the question represents the aspect that the data collection will attempt to answer, while the former (the objectives) build on a need (problem) and create room for the raising of the latter (the questions).

Attributes and Benefits of Good Research Objective

There are several attributes of a good research objective. Apart from the fact that a good objective of study must contain element of uniqueness and originality (novel idea), it must also be relevant to its context. Irrespective of the type of objective adopted for a research, Denscombe (2002) eulogizes the importance associated with the clarity of research objectives. In his view, the purpose of the research is something that needs to be understood concisely, precisely, and right from the beginning. Experience has shown that a far reaching research objective to a large extent determines the ease at which the overall research goal will be achieved. Research objectives must therefore be made clear, practicable or executable prior to the conduct of the field study. A positive expression of research focus will streamline the intentions of the researcher and simultaneously aid the realization of the research goal. Often times, vague or imprecise research objective ends up in disastrous results and loss of investment in time and monetary cost.

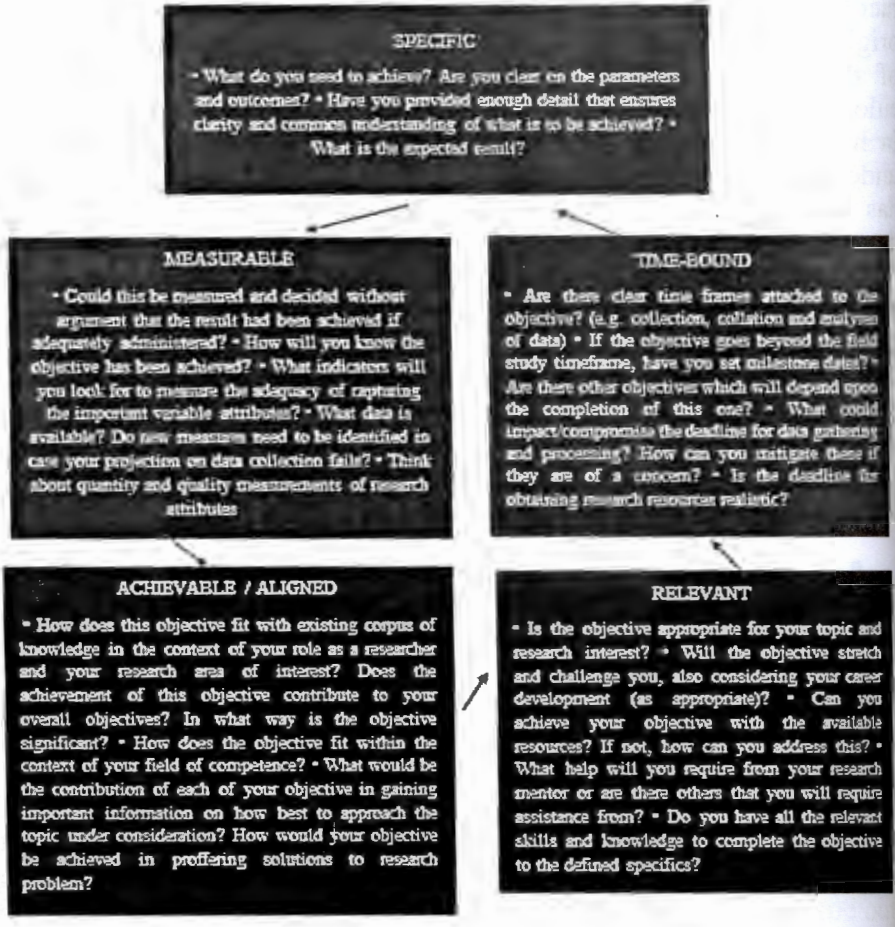
Taking cognizance of these prescriptions will confer several benefits on the documented or reported objectives:

- This will pave way for readers to understand the research better. Clarity of objectives will also allow outsiders to see the intentions of the research. Listed purpose for a research will also assist in evaluating the research. Individuals will be able to assess the quality of the piece of work in the context of the criteria applicable to such a profession. By paving way for the assessment of the work, the degree of success recorded by the work or otherwise will be so glaring. Total commitment to the dictate of the objective will help determine if the aim of the research is achieved on a long run.
- A clearly stated objective of study will help in providing a good platform within which to conduct the research. It automatically becomes the reflexion on the topic placed under investigation and thereby assisting research further in the choice of appropriate research design. Researcher is able to sift from available options

before arriving at a conclusion about what is to be investigated and the exact method that best helps in the elicitation of right data.

- The subject of research most often is bogus and multi-directional which makes the investigative effort confusive or at best cumbersome due to the general nature of the topic under focus. Research clarity of objective enables researchers to identify a relatively narrow and precise area for investigation. In essence, the researcher is able to focus attention on specific aspects, specific questions, and specific issues within the broader area of interest (P. 28-30). A qualitative research objective that will produce a far reaching outcome must be totally fitted and made comfortable to SMART Model for objective analyses. This is depicted below:

SMART RESEACH OBJECTIVE MODEL



Culled from Glasgow Introductory Workbook (2019)

SMART Model provides a blueprint on the most efficient way of approaching the complexities involved in generating a workable research objective. These include the requirement of specificity and conciseness of the topic to be explored; formulation of measurable variables that must be ably generated from the major indicators or drivers of the topic under consideration; unambiguousness in the framing of objective statements on what line of action to be pursued and how efficient to achieve them; raising relevant research questions that could be supported by relevant research instruments and; expeditious use of time to arrive at results. Researchers are advised to explore salient questions as provided in the SMART Model before embarking on the formulation of their objective of study. This will provide a sense of direction on how best to approach a given social problem and how best to arrive at a workable solution.

Conclusion

Every research effort is drawn toward achieving a purpose. In most cases, such a purpose often culminates into the development of research objective. Once the objective is formulated, it functions to aid and point the focus of any would-be research expert to salient information requirement needed to explain any kind of problem. Consequently, the research objective is synonymous with corpus of ideas often systematically implied or concretely articulated in writing to direct the attention of a researcher to what are pivotal to the pursuit and realization of a topical issue placed under focus within a time frame of a research endeavour. This automatically involves the breaking down into different components the overall goal of the research problem and with each of the component requiring a different mode of gaining insight into its appreciation. Drawing from experience, research objectives represent the manifest upon which all other research processes take effect. The researcher at this stage identifies what it is that he/she wants to gather information about and sets it out as a necessary line of action with the view of solving a definite social problem. Ignoring the essentials of research objective makes other processes impracticable and offering of solution to social problems unthinkable.

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